

SPECIAL REPORT

FIRST DOWN AND \$1 BILLION IN 4TH QUARTER

Networks face tough fall ad climate in which to recoup high costs of football rights

Football television contracts in the 1991-92 season will cost the networks about \$1 billion in rights fees, including about \$900 million for the National Football League and \$100 million for various college football and World League of American Football deals, but tight fourth-quarter budgets among advertisers are likely to hinder the networks' efforts to recoup the costs.

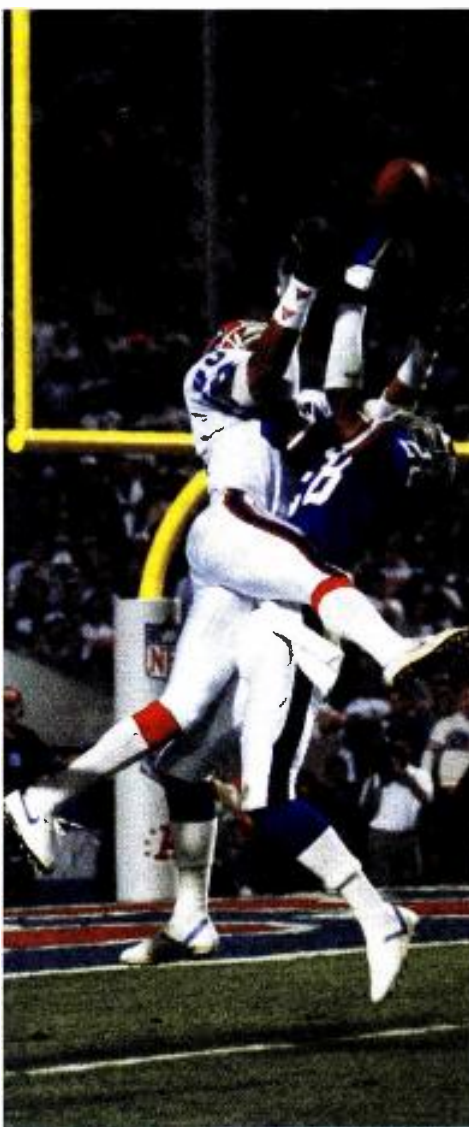
Except for a few packages—notably ABC's *Monday Night Football* and NBC's Notre Dame debut—ad agency executives said network rightsholders this year will be lucky to break even on their expensive deals. More likely is a repeat of the 1990-91 season, when NFL losses for some networks were said to exceed \$10 million.

"I think it's going to be long yardage for the whole fourth quarter," said Jerry Dominus, senior vice president, director of network negotiations, J. Walter Thompson. "Every property is going to be looking for money, and that's not going to make it easy for anybody" (BROADCASTING, Aug. 5).

The networks are said to have sold an average 60%-70% of their NFL inventory and about 50% of their college football inventory.

"The NFL market, to say the least, has been a disappointment this year," said Jack Bonnani, senior vice president, advertising sales, ESPN. He said while sales have picked up over the last two weeks and ESPN plans to eventually sell out its NFL inventory, football sales for all the networks have been affected by the late prime time upfront market and the glut of available September and October inventory. "The year has been a difficult one for everybody," said Bonnani. "It is a buyer's market."

The biggest network investor in football this season, ABC Sports, will spend about \$290 million in rights fees, with approximately \$225 million of that going to the second of a four-year NFL deal for *Monday Night Football*. Other rights expenses for ABC will include about \$35 million for College Football Association games; \$17 million for Big Ten and Pac 10 games, and about \$12



The Super Bowl—football's crown jewel. This season it belongs to CBS.

million for its second season of the World League of American Football.

Among all the football contracts, agency executives are giving highest marks to ABC's *Monday Night Football* package. This season will feature a particularly strong lineup, and some agency executives said it could have an adverse effect on ratings for Sunday games in the CBS and NBC packages.

Last year, ABC Sports saw a 5% drop in the ratings for *Monday Night Football*, which averaged a 17.3. CBS Sports held steady with a 13.8 rating on its Sunday afternoon NFL games, and NBC Sports dropped about 5% to a 10.6. ESPN saw a 13% rise, to a 6.9 rating, and TNT scored a 4.7 in its first year of NFL coverage.

CBS Sports will spend about \$265 million on the second year of its four-year deal with the NFL, presenting 17 weeks of National Football Conference games leading to the NFC wild card playoff, divisional playoffs and championship. The network also holds rights to Super Bowl XXVI, to be held Jan. 26, 1992.

Jay Rosenstein, vice president, programming, CBS Sports, said the network is looking forward to the cross-promotional opportunities in its unprecedented network sports line up of post-season baseball, NFC, Super Bowl, Winter Olympics and Final Four coverage. "It's an exciting six-month period for us," he said.

NFL TV rights will cost NBC Sports almost \$190 million in the 1991-92 season, which begins with the Seattle Seahawks vs. New Orleans on Sept. 1. The deal includes the American Football Conference wild card playoff, divisional playoffs and championship. NBC will also present the first season of its aforementioned Notre Dame deal, to cost the network \$30 million over five years.

The NBC-Notre Dame deal is one way in which the upcoming season will mark a dramatic change in the college football-television landscape. Another will be the harnessing by ABC Sports of all broadcast rights to CFA games in the first of a four-year, \$175 million contract. The deal will give ABC exclusive rights to broadcast up to 35 CFA regular season and bowl games, beginning with the Miami-Arkansas match-up on Aug. 31. The deal precludes CBS Sports from airing any CFA games for the first time in several years.

Similarly, exclusive cable rights to CFA games this season will go to ESPN as part of a four-year, \$125 million con-

WHAT THE NETWORKS PAY FOR FOOTBALL

Network	Package	Total Cost	Years	Ave. Cost Per Year
ABC-TV	NFL	\$900M	90-93	\$225M
	CFA	\$175M	91-95	\$35M
	BIG 10/PAC 10	\$119M	90-96	\$17M
	WLAf	\$24M	91-92	\$12M
CBS-TV	NFL	\$1.06B	90-93	\$265M
NBC-TV	NFL	\$752M	90-93	\$188M
	NOTRE DAME	\$30M	91-95	\$6M
ESPN	NFL	\$445.5M	90-93	\$111M
	CFA	\$125M	91-95	\$25M
TNT	NFL	\$445.5M	90-93	\$111M
WTBS	SEC	\$4M	91	\$4M
USA	WLAf	\$18M	91-94	\$4.5M

tract (both ABC and ESPN are owned by Capital Cities/ABC). The 48-game college football season on ESPN, including CFA, Big Ten and Pac 10 games, begins on Saturday, Aug. 31, with an East Carolina vs. Illinois game at 4 p.m. ET.

Turner Broadcasting will offer a dozen college football games through its contract with the Southeastern Conference, which will air on the WTBS superstation for the eighth consecutive year. A one-year extension of the conference deal lets Turner air the games this season in the usual Saturday 12:30 p.m. ET timeslot and the late afternoon slot (3:30 p.m. ET). The cable network will also televise the Gator Bowl from Jacksonville, Fla., on Dec. 29 and the Copper Bowl from Tempe, Ariz., on Dec. 31.

On the pro football side, Turner Network Television's NFL season includes three preseason and eight regular season games. Skip Caray and Pat Haden will provide play-by-play and analysis throughout the season, which begins its regular schedule with the Detroit Lions-Washington Redskins match-up on Sept. 1 at 8 p.m. ET.

ESPN, entering the second of a four-year, \$445.5 million deal with the NFL, will begin its regular season pro coverage with an Oct. 27 match-up between the Washington Redskins and the New York Giants. The cable network's 1991 NFL regular season schedule of nine games will be the biggest package to date for ESPN, which will also air the AFC-NFC Pro Bowl from Honolulu on Jan. 2.

Questions remain about the NFL's

pay-per-view plans. Commissioner Paul Tagliabue has mentioned an experiment to test pay per view in two markets in 1993. That plan would most likely include the PPV telecast of one or more games a month that would supplement an existing TV package.

Big questions surround the potential for the second season of the fledgling World League of American Football, which debuted last spring to disappointing ratings. ABC plans to telecast nine WLAf games in spring 1992 as it enters the second year of a \$24 million, two-year deal with the league: USA Network will be entering the second of an \$18 million, four-year deal. It remains unclear whether ABC will renew its deal with the league, which is said to have approached at least one other party, Turner Sports, about a possible TV deal.

On the radio side, CBS Radio Sports will begin the second of a five-year exclusive NFL contract on Sept. 2 with play-by-play coverage of a San Francisco 49ers-New York Giants game. The 43-game schedule will feature 31 regular season and 12 post-season contests, including Super Bowl XXVI. The primary announcing team of Jack Buck and Hank Stram will be joined by Howard David, John Dockery, Pat Haden, Jim Nantz, Brad Nessler and John Rooney.

Mutual Broadcasting will air 17 NFL doubleheaders via its radio network, beginning with the Philadelphia vs. Green Bay and Miami vs. Buffalo games on Sept. 1. Play-by-play commentary will be handled by Tony Roberts, Harry Kallas and Bill Rosinski; color will be provided by Jack Ham and Jack Snow. —

SYNDICATION: TV PLAYER ON A BIG FIELD

As the NFL's new \$30-million syndicated Notre Dame and player enter Capital Cities/Big East Telecast, the college country to act as a change catalyst.

The arrangement, new for the Providence conference, which included the TV distribution of football games. And have been televised through the now-defunct Independent Football League, which had been distributed by Pilot Teleproductions, since 1987.

Big East in 1991-92 will season-long package that will be cast in the respective markets of the member football schools: College, University of Miami, University of Pittsburgh, The State University of New Jersey at Rutgers, Syracuse University, Temple University, Virginia Tech and West Virginia University and other markets nationally.

Big East games are set to air in almost 30% of the nation's TV homes, according to the league, including deals with stations WABC-TV New York, WPVI-TV Philadelphia, WCVB-TV Boston, WBFS-TV Miami, WTAE-TV Pittsburgh, WTNH-TV New Haven, Conn., WLNE-TV New Bedford, Mass., WAYK-TV Melbourne (Orlando), Fla., and WTMV-TV Lakeland (Tampa-St. Petersburg), Fla.

Former rights holder Jefferson-Pilot Teleproductions will continue to handle distribution of Atlantic Coast Conference games, beginning with a noon kickoff of Virginia at Maryland. The company will produce a total of 17 games over 13 Saturdays and will be seen on 35 stations, including every market in Maryland, the District of Columbia, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida.

Advertising inventory on the ACC regional telecasts is almost completely sold out, according to Jimmy Rayburn, executive producer, Jefferson-Pilot. He said that unlike the national network

packages, which are still deep in the selling process, syndicators tend to lock up regional deals prior to the upfront selling season. One such advertiser, Atlanta-based Delta Airlines, wanted to reach the ACC's regional audience to promote the airline's Southwestern flights. "Well over 50% of our advertisers don't buy network spots," he said.

Similarly, Charlotte, N.C.-based Raycom Sports and Entertainment is more than 75% sold out on its 12-game package of Southwest Conference games. The company will provide games to broadcasters in Texas, Arkansas and Louisiana, and the Prime Network will carry the games nationally.

Raycom's Southwest coverage begins with the Aug. 28 Kick-Off Classic at the Meadowlands. Other company productions will include the Disneyland Pigskin Classic, the Dec. 30 Freedom Bowl and, for CBS Sports, the Dec. 28 Blockbuster Bowl.

In other syndication packages, the Blue & White Network will, for the third consecutive year, televise a select schedule of college football games featuring Brigham Young University and the U.S. Air Force Academy. Beginning Aug. 31, B&W will present 10 televised contests to more than 40 national cable and broadcast affiliates in 47 states. The new season will bring in a potential 1.5

million additional viewers with the addition of stations WADL-TV Detroit, WOAC-TV Cleveland/Canton and others.

Outside the syndication route, hundreds of college football games will be presented, mostly on a tape-delayed basis, on regional cable sports networks around the country. The 4.2-million subscriber Prime Ticket Network, for example, will schedule at least 79 college football games representing six collegiate conferences from across the country, beginning Sept. 7. Similar arrangements have been made at SportsChannel, Madison Square Garden Network and several other cable sports networks nationally.

-28

LOCAL RADIO NFL COVERAGE

Atlanta Falcons WSB(AM) Atlanta

Reg. net. of 65 stations; four preseason, 16 regular; station holds rights in third year of three-year pact.

Buffalo Bills WBEN(AM) Buffalo

Regional network of 24 stations; five preseason, 16 regular; station holds rights in second of five-year contract.

Chicago Bears WGN(AM) Chicago

Reg. net. of 60 stations; five preseason, 16 regular; station holds rights in third year of three-year pact.

Cincinnati Bengals WKRC(AM) Cincinnati

Reg. net. of 41 stations; four preseason, 16 regular; station holds rights in first year of three-year contract.

Cleveland Browns WNK(AM)- WMMS(FM) Cleveland

Reg. net. of 49 stations; four preseason, 16 regular; Score Communications holds rights in first year of three-year deal.

Dallas Cowboys KVIL(AM) Dallas

Reg. net. of 91, Spanish-language stations network of 10 stations; four preseason, 16 regular; station holds rights in first year of five-year deal.

Denver Broncos KOA(AM) Denver

Reg. net. of 60 stations; five preseason, 16 regular; station holds rights in third year of seven-year contract.

Detroit Lions WWJ(AM) Detroit

Reg. net. of 33 stations; five preseason, 16 regular; station holds rights in third year of three-year contract.

Green Bay Packers WTMJ(AM) Milwaukee

Reg. net. of 51 stations; four preseason, 16 regular; station holds rights under long-term contract.

Houston Oilers KTRH(AM) Houston

Reg. net. of 45 stations; four preseason, 16 regular; station holds rights in second year of five-year pact.

Indianapolis Colts WIBC(AM) Indianapolis

Reg. net. of 23 stations; four preseason, 16 regular; station holds rights.

Kansas City Chiefs KCFX(FM) Kansas City

Reg. net. of 58 stations; four preseason, 16 regular; station holds rights in first year of three-year pact (option on fourth).

Los Angeles Raiders KFI(AM) Los Angeles

Reg. net. of 37 stations; five preseason, 16 regular; Bob Speck Productions holds rights in final year of four-year pact.

Los Angeles Rams KMPC(AM) Los Angeles

Reg. net. of 24 stations; two preseason, 16 regular; station, which holds rights in second year of five-year contract, has licensed KLAC(AM) Los Angeles to air two preseason games (due to conflicts with KMPC's baseball broadcasts) and XEPRS(AM) Rosarito, Mex., to air four preseason and all regular season games in Spanish.

Miami Dolphins WIOD(AM) Miami and WQBA(AM) Miami

WIOD: reg. net. of 28 stations; five preseason, 16 regular; station holds rights in first year of three-year pact; WQBA (Spanish-language): five preseason, 16 regular; station holds rights in third year of three-year pact.

Minnesota Vikings KEEY-FM Minneapolis

Reg. net. of 90 stations; four preseason, 16 regular; station holds rights in first year of three-year contract.

New England Patriots WBZ(AM) Boston

Reg. net. of 22 stations; four preseason, 16 regular; station holds rights in first year of three-year contract.

New Orleans Saints WWL(AM) New Orleans

Reg. net. of 40 stations; four preseason, 16 regular; station holds rights in third year of three-year pact.

New York Giants WNEW(AM) New York

Reg. net. of 34 stations; four preseason, 16 regular; station holds rights in third year of multiyear pact.

New York Jets WCBS(AM) New York

No reg. net.; four preseason, 16 regular; station holds rights in fourth year of five-year deal.

Philadelphia Eagles WIP(AM) Philadelphia

Reg. net. of 30 stations; four preseason, 16 regular; station holds rights in third year of three-year contract.

Phoenix Cardinals KTAR(AM) Phoenix

Reg. net. of 21 stations; four preseason, 16 regular; station holds rights in fourth year of five-year deal.

Pittsburgh Steelers WTAE(AM)-WVTV(FM) Pittsburgh

Reg. net. of 36 stations; four preseason, 16 regular; station holds rights in second year of three-year pact.

San Diego Chargers XETRA(AM) Tijuana

Reg. net. of four stations; four preseason, 16 regular; station holds rights in fifth year of 10-year contract.

San Francisco 49ers KGO(AM) San Francisco

Reg. net. of 40 stations; five preseason, 16 regular; station holds rights in second year of three-year pact.

Seattle Seahawks KIRO(AM) Seattle

Reg. net. of 55 stations; four preseason, 16 regular; station holds rights in third year of five-year contract.

Tampa Bay Buccaneers WQYK-AM-FM Tampa Bay

Reg. net. of 34 stations; four preseason, 16 regular; station holds rights in first year of five-year contract.

Washington Redskins WMAJ(AM) Washington

Reg. net. of 94 stations; four preseason, 16 regular; station holds rights in third year of three-year contract.

Local radio contracts during the 1991-92 season will represent an estimated \$40 million in additional revenue for NFL teams, which derive about 90% of their dollars from network contracts and ticket sales. Believed to be among the more lucrative deals is a new five-year agreement between the Dallas Cowboys and KVIL(AM) High-

land Park, Tex. (Dallas), which is said to be bringing in more than \$3 million per season for the team. Other teams that have opted not to renew existing contracts in search of more lucrative deals this year include the New England Patriots and the Minnesota Vikings, which have each signed three-year deals with new stations.